

Ropes & Gray has long provided pro bono assistance to immigrants and migrants, from helping with asylum applications to responding to humanitarian crises worldwide. In this issue, we shine a spotlight on more recent immigration efforts. We begin by interviewing pro bono immigration counsel **Marianne Staniunas** and then take a closer look at two new projects in New York and California, one of which pilots a new way of working collaboratively across our offices. In addition, this issue showcases the individuals and teams recognized at our 2023 Pro Bono Annual Event, as well as new matters globally. We also had a chance to speak with Chicago counsel **Renai Rodney** about her work with Lawyers Without Borders.

SPOTLIGHT ON IMMIGRATION



Meet Our Pro Bono Immigration Counsel

Q Tell us about your experience with immigration law.

A I have worked in the immigration legal space for more than 20 years—since before law school. My work has ranged from representing asylum seekers through a fellowship with the Political Asylum Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project while I was a corporate associate at Mintz to representing clients in corporate immigration matters as part of a small boutique immigration practice to mentoring other attorneys on many different kinds of humanitarian cases. I returned to PAIR as a Staff Attorney in 2019 before joining Ropes & Gray.

Q What does your role at Ropes & Gray involve?

A I mentor all of our attorney teams working on pro bono immigration matters and also support commercial client teams as immigration questions arise. On the pro bono side, I think one of my strengths is serving as a translator between the law firm and nonprofit worlds. I have a good understanding of the needs of an organization like PAIR and a firm like Ropes & Gray, and how they might differ at times. I can use this knowledge to better match the resources of our firm to the needs of a nonprofit and ultimately help better serve the folks we are trying to reach. On the commercial side, I am able to quickly find answers to immigration-related questions to keep deals and agreement negotiations moving forward.

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Recent Immigration PRO BONO PARTNERS



Immigration Equality



KIND
KIDS IN NEED OF DEFENSE



RAICES



SAFE PASSAGE

Q Are there any notable projects you're working on now?

A I have been working with a team that recently filed an amicus brief on behalf of immigration law professors, former immigration judges and Board of Immigration Appeals members in a case before the First Circuit. We argue that there is a statutory distinction between one of the standards applied in deciding asylum cases and another form of relief called withholding of removal. This is important because an acknowledgment of this legal distinction by the First Circuit could mean that individuals who may not be eligible for asylum could still be protected under the withholding of removal statute from being deported back to a country where they are likely to experience extreme harm. The team includes partner **Dan Ward** and associates **Abby Alfaro**, **Colleen Roberts** and **Michelle Mlacker**.

On the administrative side of our pro bono program, I'm working with **Sam Murphy**, a Northeastern University student participating in a six-month cooperative learning program at the firm, on a project to collect samples of immigration-related legal documents that teams at the firm have prepared and filed. We've done so much amazing work and want to make sure everyone can access this collective knowledge easily.

Q What would you say to someone who is considering taking on an immigration matter?

A There is so much in the U.S. news cycle about migrants, but taking on an immigration case is an opportunity to understand the people whose lives are impacted beyond the headlines. It's very powerful to hear a noncitizen's story and get to know them as a human being, not just a statistic. I've seen the way it can completely change someone's point of view, affecting how you vote, what businesses you support, and your perspective of our country and the wider world.

Q Any final thoughts?

A I'd like everyone at the firm to think of me as a resource, whether you're working on an immigration case or just want to find out more about our work. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

Responding to an Asylum Crisis in New York

Tens of thousands of migrants have sought refuge in New York City over the past year, seeking shelter and work. As part of the city's response, Mayor Adams launched the Asylum Application Help Center in June with the help of law firms, companies and universities to assist with asylum applications. Ropes & Gray was one of the first to raise its hand to take part in the clinic, which will receive funding through the end of the year.



After completing a two-hour training, our team members participated in daylong clinics where we helped record migrants' stories and completed applications, often with the help of interpreters. The stakes are high, given the short time frame afforded to asylum seekers—only one year to file after entering the U.S. As of early August, the center has helped migrants mail more than 1,300 applications.

THE TEAM: Partners **Lisa Bebchick**, **Stefanie Birkmann**, **Helen Gugel**, **Bryan Hunkele** and **Suni Sreepada**; counsel **Joseph Rafferty**, **Tristan VanDeventer** and **Nicola Rosenstock**; associates **Michael Ardeljan**, **Matt Corriel**, **Zahra Fatima**, **Michael Gauvin**, **Michael Shulman**, **Ciara Stratford**, **Andrew Todres**, **Jolene Wang** and **Renee Whyte**; senior benefits consultant **Jonathan Conon**; knowledge management attorney **Diana Chen**; and pro bono team members **Byrne Harrison** and **Marianne Staniunas**.

WHY IT MATTERS

“Ropes & Gray is proud to help provide legal assistance to the tens of thousands of asylum seekers fleeing dangerous situations for a chance at a new beginning.”

— **JOHN SORKIN**, New York office managing partner

California and Asia Offices Collaborate to Assist Undocumented Youth

Undocumented youth may be eligible for legal status in the United States in certain cases of abuse, abandonment or neglect. To apply, they first need a state court order that makes this finding, which enables them to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). One roadblock to receiving SIJS is that there is an annual limitation on the number of visas issued to youth with this status, which has created a significant backlog in the system. Even so, a SIJS applicant can get into the visa “line” on the date when their SIJS application is filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

To help youth get “in line” sooner, Kids in Need of Defense’s (KIND) California office initiated a new clinic model, asking law firms to assist eligible youth in obtaining the predicate state court orders they will need to apply for SIJS. Once they are obtained, KIND will shepherd the cases through the SIJS process with USCIS. KIND invited Ropes to participate, and we saw this as this an opportunity for attorneys in our Asia and California offices to collaborate. Teams of attorneys across the San Francisco, Silicon Valley, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo offices are together working through each step in obtaining the state court orders, including participating in client meetings. We look forward to making this clinic a regular part of our immigration work and expect that this well-received effort will be a pilot for future pro bono global team projects.

THE TEAM: Partners **Andrew Thomases** and **Minh-Chau Le** are overseeing the effort with team lead associates **Lucy Wang**, **Yujin Choi**, **Tatum Wheeler** and **Chris Su**. The team also includes counsel **Han Xu** and **Boxin Wang**, and associates **Rob Cahill**, **Jieying Ding**, **Fiona Fei**, **Lily Li**, **Angela Liu**, **Takashi Nakamura**, **Jacob Penniman**, **Sydney Yazzolino**, **Carissa Yuk** and **Billy Zhang**.

WHY IT MATTERS

“Working with the Ropes & Gray team has been an absolute pleasure, and I am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to collaborate with such talented attorneys.”

– **HON. CHERYL CHAMBERS,**

Associate Justice, Appellate Division, Second Judicial Department, New York State Supreme Court

WHAT WE ARE DOING



Two New Efforts to Help Hong Kong Community Organizations

In Hong Kong, we are supporting CLIX, a new online portal created by PILnet and Equal Justice that connects pro bono lawyers with community organizations that need legal support. Our team reviewed the portal, offered feedback and road-tested the system as part of the pilot. We look forward to the service, which aims to better connect lawyers and organizations.

We are also assisting Orbis International, a nonprofit fighting avoidable blindness, with developing a charter for their volunteer program that offers complimentary educational assistance to visually impaired children in China. The charter details the governance, structure, objectives and operations of the volunteer program.

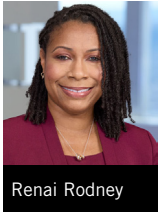
THE ORBIS TEAM: Partner **Katherine Wang**, and associates **Fiona Fei**, **Rui Xie** and **Rose Wang**.

Fostering Diversity Following U.S. Supreme Court Affirmative Action Ruling

Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down affirmative action at colleges and universities. Weeks later, the New York State Bar Association created a task force made up of judges and lawyers focused on advancing diversity, including firm chair **Julie Jones**. In August, the task force issued a report containing recommendations on how institutions of higher education, corporations, law firms, courts and government entities can preserve diversity despite the ruling. Our team was instrumental in drafting the report, particularly the section related to the value of diversity in the judiciary and the implications of the Supreme Court’s decision on judicial diversity.



THE TEAM: In addition to **Julie Jones**, the team includes partners **Jen Cormier** and **Steven Zaorski**; senior attorney **Kirsten Linder**; associates **Regina Gromen**, **Kai Knight-Turcan**, **Jordan Lieberman**, **Zack Price**, **Christina Ravelo**, **Chris Su** and **Sydney Yazzolino**; and paralegals **Mel Cribbin**, **Kirby Goodman** and **Jodie Hamilton**.



Renai Rodney

Renai Rodney's Experience with Lawyers Without Borders

Since 2015, Ropes & Gray has worked with international nongovernmental organization Lawyers Without Borders (LWOB) to help strengthen elements of the local legal infrastructure in parts of Africa. Counsel Renai Rodney recently traveled to Kenya to volunteer with LWOB and shares her experience with us.

Q How did you get involved?

A The firm reached out to former prosecutors and former public defenders to see if anyone was interested in going to Kenya to participate in the three-day training. I previously served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Northern District of Illinois, and I prosecuted sex trafficking cases involving minors, some of which involved child pornography. This work was among the most meaningful I had done as a prosecutor, as it involved individual victims and had wide-ranging impact. When offered the opportunity to leverage my experience to engage with others involved in this important work, I immediately said yes.

Q Describe the purpose of the training and your role.

A The training was for prosecutors, law enforcement officials and victim advocates across Kenya who focus on crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children. The sessions were split up to address many aspects of the prosecution of these crimes, including charging considerations, interview techniques and self-care.

One training I led was about Kenya's laws prohibiting the use of a computer in the sexual exploitation of children. Kenya's statutes are relatively new in this regard and there is little local precedent for Kenyan prosecutors to draw from. A team of Ropes & Gray associates from Boston and London helped with my presentation, researching cases under comparable laws in the United States and the United Kingdom. A big thank-you to associates **Thanithia Billings**, **Mandy Cheung** and **Catherine Keeling**. In addition, together with a magistrate judge from Oklahoma and a partner from Jones Day, I trained participants on preparing child witnesses for trial and introducing electronic evidence.

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EXPANDING OUR REACH



In this issue, we spotlight our partnership with Aon.

THE PRO BONO CLIENT:

The Truth, Hope & Justice Initiative is an organization committed to advancing social justice and racial equality by publishing stories and sharing the human truths of mothers impacted by unjustified police violence in the United States. We were introduced to the client through the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance and are working with them on projects in Chicago and Philadelphia. One current matter involves taking a closer look at wrongful conviction litigation in Chicago.

HOW WE'RE COLLABORATING: Thomson Reuters built a web-based, searchable database into which volunteers from Ropes & Gray and Aon input information from approximately 300 wrongful conviction cases filed in Chicago since 2000. The data we're capturing includes the amount of money the City of Chicago has spent in defending, settling and paying out jury awards for these cases. The Truth, Hope & Justice Initiative wants to better understand the underlying trends related to this data, so we've enlisted Aon's data scientists to help us analyze the information.

THE RESULT: When complete, the database will be the first of its kind to collect and analyze data related to wrongful convictions litigation in Chicago. The founder of the Truth, Hope & Justice Initiative, attorney Andrew M. Stroth, will present the findings to the various stakeholders from the City of Chicago to advocate for changes in policy, including improvements to how the city approaches these lawsuits and trains and manages its police force.

THE TEAM: In addition to 13 volunteers from Aon, the team includes counsel **Renai Rodney**; associates **Catherine Steubing**, **Chris Fons**, **Danae Rosario**, **Emma Coreno**, **Esteban De La Torre**, **Josh Troper**, **Kacie Brinkman**, **Katie Iacovelli**, **Kelley Chandler**, **Meg Lewellyn**, **Phil Wu**, **Rebecca Roy**, **Samantha Das**, **Sammy Gordon**, **Shanzeh Daudi**, **Tina Chao**, **Tori Landale** and **Will Spelder**; and paralegals **Henry Rogers** and **Margaret Michalowski**.

Q What did you gain from the experience?

A It was such a great learning opportunity. I heard about advocates' challenges in the Kenyan criminal justice system, which range from lack of resources and overwhelming caseloads to working within a culture where technology is out-pacing society's understanding of the myriad ways children can be exploited. I also found it interesting to learn about different cultural taboos and how the prosecutors have to confront those when working to combat sexual exploitation of children. It's a difficult job these folks have, and often thankless, but it was my privilege to engage with them as they prepare to tackle the work.

Celebrating Our Contributions

At the firm's 20th annual global Pro Bono Annual Event on June 1, Ropes & Gray celebrated the pro bono achievements of attorneys and support team members. This year's theme was "All in for Justice."

Pro bono committee co-chair **Chris Conniff** opened by noting that in 2022, Ropes & Gray was "all in across the globe and all in for the needs our communities require." The award winners were as follows:

OUTSTANDING PRO BONO CONTRIBUTIONS IN ASIA – A team of associates and partners from Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai, Tokyo and London helped update OutLEADERSHIP's Country CEO Briefs. These briefs outline laws and regulations affecting LGBTQ+ people in a particular country and showcase policies a country can implement to be more inclusive.

OUTSTANDING PRO BONO TEAM – A cross-office, cross-practice team supported BlueCheck Ukraine in providing anti-corruption and international risk advice, as well as strategic advice in a wide array of corporate matters, to help the organization safely fast-track financial aid to the people of Ukraine in the midst of war and pivot to other crises worldwide. Associates **Sean Adessky** and **Jesse Vreeken** accepted the award on behalf of the team.

OUTSTANDING PRO BONO CONTRIBUTIONS IN LONDON – A

London team worked to clear the name of Andy Malkinson, a man convicted of rape 20 years ago. Associate **Nathan Sekhar** accepted the award on behalf of the team. (See accompanying box on next page for more details.)



Larry Rowe (middle), along with several members of the Rosie's Place team, including (left to right) Mahima Menghani, Charlie Guscott, Eve Rice and Aidan Temperino.

OUTSTANDING PRO BONO CONTRIBUTOR: PARTNER AWARD –

Partner **Larry Rowe** was recognized for his work at women's shelter Rosie's Place, where he has led pro bono teams helping guests with debt issues for the past eight years. Larry has also assisted pro bono clients Physicians for Human Rights, the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center and Democracy International.

DEBORAH LEVI AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRO BONO SERVICE –

Associate **Kathryn Thornton** received the award in memory of former Ropes & Gray litigator and pro bono advocate Deborah Levi for her work with families separated at the Texas border under President Trump's "zero tolerance" immigration policy and her deep commitment to veterans' rights.

TERRY IANDIORIO PRO BONO LEADERSHIP AWARD –

A number of Ropes & Gray teams working with the Chicago-based Truth, Hope & Justice Initiative received this award in honor of Terry Iandiorio, a Boston government enforcement counsel who passed away in 2017. The team is helping to find data to support the human stories of those who had been impacted by unjustified police violence in the U.S, specifically in Chicago and Philadelphia. Counsel **Renai Rodney** accepted the award on behalf of all the teams. (See "Expanding our reach" on page 4 for more details.)

PRO BONO NEWS

OUTSTANDING PRO BONO CONTRIBUTOR: RETIRED PARTNER

AWARD – Retired litigation partner **Tom Hannigan** was honored for his work for PAIR since 2013, when he took an Access to Justice Fellowship with the nonprofit. For more than 10 years, Tom has been a powerful advocate for asylum seekers and immigrants from around the world.



Tom Hannigan (right), joined by (left to right) Marianne Staniunas, Jenny Rikoski and PAIR Executive Director Anita Sharma.

Firm chair **Julie Jones** concluded the ceremony by celebrating the award recipients and showing gratitude to all those who contributed to our pro bono efforts. She noted that the ceremony was also a moment of reflection on Ropes & Gray's role in the world as a powerful institution that can improve lives on a global scale.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN LONDON

ANDY MALKINSON'S CONVICTION OVERTURNED

Andy Malkinson served more than 17 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. He maintained his innocence from the start, twice applying to the UK's Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), which had the authority to refer his case to the Court of Appeal to potentially overturn the conviction. But he was denied both times. Released in 2020, Andy was still determined to clear his name. Having a conviction impeded his ability to find work and move on with his life.

Working with APPEAL, a charity that fights miscarriages of justice, our team spent more than 2,000 hours searching for new evidence and grounds for consideration. Eventually, we helped uncover DNA evidence that pointed to another suspect. We submitted a third, successful application to CCRC. Andy's case was heard by the Court of Appeal in July, and his conviction was finally overturned. The government has since launched an independent inquiry into the matter.

TEAM: Partner **Amanda Raad**, associates **Sarah Lambert-Porter** and **Nathan Sekhar**, and trainees **Caroline Easterfield** and **Charlotte Hoggarth**.

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